

Remarks/Arguments

Claims 1-3, 5-7, 10, 12-14, 16-22, 24, 26-34 remain in the application. Claims 4, 8, 9, 11, 15, 23, and 25 have been cancelled. Claims 1, 3, 6-10, 12, 22, 23, 26-28, and 30-33 have been amended. Claims 26-31 have been reinstated.

Telephone Interview

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for conducting the telephone interview of April 29, 2004. A complete and proper recordation of the substance of the telephone interview, as follows:

- a) No exhibits were shown nor was any demonstration conducted.
- b) All claims were discussed.
- c) All the prior art cited against the present application was discussed in general.
- d) It was agreed that a proposed amendment to the instant apparatus claims including a processor or controller which serves to perform the steps recited in the instant, withdrawn method claims would be entered upon refiling of this application, and that since with this limitations added, the search for the apparatus claims and the withdrawn method claims would overlap, the restriction requirement would be withdrawn.

Amendments to the Claims

Claims 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 22, 32 have been amended as proposed and agreed upon to include the limitation of a processor to perform the steps recited in the instant method claims.

Claims 32 and 33 have been amended to include the further limitations of the processor controlling provision of a predetermined nitriding potential and the third processing cell for providing post nitriding treatment, respectively.

Reinstated method claims 26-28, 30, and 31 have been amended in order to avoid invoking 35 U.S.C. 112, sixth paragraph. In particular, all instances of phrases such as --the steps of--, and -- the step of-- have been deleted. Applicant wishes to note for the record that the amendments are not intended to be narrowing, nor are the amendments being made for a reason related substantially to patentability.

Applicant respectfully submits that no new matter has been added in the amendments.

Applicant further respectfully submits that the typographical errors in claims 2 and 5 objected to by the examiner have been corrected in conjunction with the response filed on January 27, 2004.

Applicant looks forward to favourable reconsideration of the present application.

Please charge any additional fees required or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No: 50-1142.

Respectfully submitted,



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